Factors That Affect the Delivery of Podiatric Care in the United States

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Purpose
This study investigated the impact of several factors on DPM saturation on a state by state basis in order to determine which factors were a strong indicator of the availability of podiatric services to the population.

Methods
The total number of active DPM licenses in each state were obtained from data provided by each state’s podiatric medical society¹. These numbers were compared to the Bureau of Labor Statistics² data for total number of physicians in each state, mean physician income, median DPM income, and registered member of the American Orthopedic Foot & Ankle Society (AOFAS) as provided by their public provider directory³. Statistical analysis utilizing Pearson’s r coefficient was performed to determine strength of relationships between variables as well as logistic regression analysis where p<0.05 was statistically significant. Podiatric need index was derived by dividing population by 20,000 and dividing the product by the total number of active DPM licenses in that particular state.

Literature Review
The Association of American Medical Colleges estimates the US will ill see a shortage of up to nearly 122,000 physicians by 2032⁴. While this is projected to occur mostly in the primary care setting, the trend for physician shortage may affect all specialties to some degree. Meanwhile, the American Association of Colleges of Podiatric Medicine published data showing that 2018 enrollment was the lowest it has been in over a decade⁵. To date, there are no studies that examine the state to state saturation of DPMs and causative factors.

Results
• There were positive correlations between total number of DPMs and AOFAS members (r=0.69) and total number of physicians (r=0.91), a weak positive correlation between DPMs and median DPM salary, and a weak negative correlation between DPMs and mean physician salary.

• None of these relationships proved to be statistically significant.

• DPM concentration was highest in the Northeast, Utah, and Florida.

Analysis & Discussion
The data from the BLS and AOFAS relies on self reporting and may not be representative of the entire population, but it serves as a reference point as it is the most reliable data available. There appears to be no reasonable explanation through the study variables as to why there are geographical concentrations of practicing DPMs. The results of this investigation reveal that the factors influencing the delivery of foot & ankle care by DPMs are complex. Future studies should focus on other variables.

References

Abstract
Factors that affect the delivery of podiatric care in the United States were examined with statistical analysis. The results revealed positive correlations between DPMs and AOFAS members, and total number of physicians, as well as a weak positive correlation between DPMs and median DPM salary, and a weak negative correlation between DPMs and mean physician salary. These relationships did not prove to be statistically significant. Future studies should focus on other variables.

Footnotes
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